

Myth of the Lost Cause

Presentation Notes

June 9, 2016

Do the thing about "You know that slavery was not the cause of the Civil War."

Purpose -- To briefly discuss a subject that is often mentioned, usually in passing, but **might not be clearly understood**. Also hope to encourage some thoughtful discussion about the current influence, if any, about the Myth. This discussion will entail a critique of the substance of the myth but is not intended to criticize or minimize the integrity, gallantry, or courage of the soldiers who fought in the Confederate army.

What is the Myth of the Lost Cause?

There is **no official version** nor is there any central clearinghouse.

My Cliff's Notes Version: The South knew that it faced overwhelming odds but was compelled for principled reasons -- which certainly did not include slavery -- to secede. Notwithstanding overwhelming odds the Confederacy, given the superior gallantry and bravery of its soldiers, led by magnificent generals from Virginia, almost won the war but for Longstreet's insubordination at Gettysburg.

Most extreme version contends CSA did not lose the war but merely withdrew while still undefeated.

What Are the Reasons for the Lost Cause --

The South emerged from the Civil War **thoroughly beaten on a scale unmatched in our history**. At the end:

- 25% of the White male population of military age was dead while another 25% of the same group was maimed in some way.
- Southern economy was shattered having lost 60% of its wealth;
- Its industry was destroyed;
- Its ports were closed;
- Much of its infrastructure was either destroyed or uprooted;
- There was tremendous losses of agricultural animals and other assets;
- No ability to feed or equip soldiers;
- Its territories were carved up;
- Its armies surrounded or on the run;
- Desertion was rampant;
- Military leaders who knew war was over

Although it was a complete, unequivocal defeat but **much of the population remained largely unrepentant**.

For the South's ruling families the war turned the world upside down. They were **stripped of their privileged status** and their most valuable property. Reconstruction deprived them of their totalitarian power they had previously wielded over the Afro-American men, women and children who provided most of the South's great wealth.

The contributors to the Myth needed to do **two basic things**:

1. **To justify** or at least rationalize, or to redeem themselves, why the Confederacy had entered into a war that was so costly in terms of lives lost and/or damage to its economy, indeed its entire way of life, and

2. Knowing that historians would look to their writings, **to create a "correct" written narrative** or history for their descendants and other members of future generations.

Nurtured a public memory in best possible light addressing:

- Antebellum Southern society and slavery;
- The Constitutionality of secession;
- The causes of the Civil War;
- The characteristics of their wartime society; and
- The reasons for their defeat.

Eventually **two versions of the Civil War emerged:**

1. The historical version, in other words **what in fact happened**, and
2. The Myth of the Lost Cause that became **an American legend** about a heroic and romantic melodrama, an honorable sectional duel, a time of martial glory on both sides, and triumphant nationalism. Eventually the Southern rationalization spread to and was accepted in large part even in the North.

In Order to Endure any Myth must have grains of truth. Partly truth and party fiction.

The Myth has endured in large part because some of it, especially the military aspects, are partly grounded in fact. Lee was a gifted general who was able to inspire his soldiers against serious disadvantages.

- That Lee was a fine gentleman with excellent military record.
- Had great command presence, military bearing and superb temperament.
- Audacious; courageous almost to a fault.

- In fact his reputation as the nation's outstanding military officer prior to Ft Sumter was probably justified.
- His record after Civil War was exemplary and deserves rich commendation.

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia consistently fought against superior numbers and material. On the other hand Lost Cause advocates distorted the record by

1. **denying** that Lee had any defects,
2. **ignoring** Confederate advantages, and
3. **failing** to notice that the war was also being fought, and lost, beyond Virginia.

There are also Northern adjustments to the truth: Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan.

What are the **Core Elements**? A patina of romantic memories about the courage and glories of individuals.

1. From post-war writings by Stephens and Davis: The **South's cause became a noble one in defense of an idea** rather than a mean one in defense of materialistic interests.
2. **The inevitability of Union victory was due to its material and manpower superiority.** The futility of Southern military efforts only intensified the tragedy and honor of these sacrifices.
3. **The Confederacy was the one true Christian society** seeking to maintain the concept of a distinct, and superior, white Southern culture against perceived attacks.

4. **Antebellum slavery was essentially benevolent -- a sincere effort to uplift an inferior race.** The prewar South was characterized as a time of near perfection, a utopia for white people and a blessing for slaves.

What are the Origins of the Myth? Some seeds were planted during the war itself, for instance during his farewell to his troops at Appomattox Lee complained that they had been defeated only by overpowering forces. Writing about Civil War soon became almost a cottage industry.

Takes its name from an 1866 book *The Lost Cause: The Standard Southern History of the War of the Confederates* by a Richmond newspaper editor Edward Pollard who said among other things "**slavery ... was in fact nothing more than a system of Negro servitude in the South ... one of the mildest and most beneficial systems of servitude in the world.**"

No former Confederate did more to shape Lost Cause writings than did **Jubal ("Old Jube") Early**. Although the Myth of the Lost Cause has many origins, Early's vitriolic writings were prominent contributions to the cult belief that the Confederacy had good, noble purposes, but that notwithstanding the superiority of Southern soldiers and generals **its war aims were overwhelmed** by the North's greater population and material resources. Early, whom Lee called his "bad old man," was a rarity among Civil War generals on either side. A lifelong bachelor who fathered four illegitimate children, he had none of the usual Confederate ideological beliefs, indeed having opposed secession. He was a gruff, blunt atheist who was completely indifferent about gaining any popularity. Early was one of the most respected combat officers in Lee's army yet his irascibility, arrogance, derisive, and abrasive nature meant his was also despised by almost everyone. Early was a non-stop talker with an endless litany of opinions on a wide variety of subjects. He had a general appearance of carelessness and disarray who carried an "inevitable canteen," supposedly filled with Kentucky "Old Crow."ⁱ

Early's 2nd Corps, which Early inherited in 1864 when Ewell became too incapacitated to continue, was once part of Stonewall Jackson's command and was considered as probably the Confederacy's finest corps. However during the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1864 Early's reputation suffered a complete reversal from being a Rebel hero, perhaps second in standing only to Lee, to becoming a total command disaster. Although Early's courage could never be questioned, his irascible and caustic nature prevented him from developing any meaningful rapport with his associates and subordinates. Furthermore **his losses in the Confederacy's breadbasket**, upon which so much depended, brought unrelenting public scorn, much of which might have been exaggerated and even unwarranted.

After much of what was left of Early's 2nd Corps was transferred back to Lee's Petersburg defenses Early himself remained in the Shenandoah Valley with a small force of 1,600 that on March 2, 1865 was almost annihilated at Waynesboro, Virginia. Thereafter -- realizing that Old Jube no longer enjoyed the confidence of soldiers, other commanders, or public opinion -- Lee relieved Early from further command responsibilities. When Lee surrendered to Grant, Early fled to Texas hoping to join **Kirby Smith** who had already surrendered by the time Early arrived. Being fearful of Northern retaliation because of his torching of Chambersburg in 1864, Early then took a **voluntary exile to Canada** before returning to Virginia in 1869. He had become so embittered that he said "... I think I could scalp a Yankee woman and child without winking my eyes." Early died in 1894.

Much of the writings that contributed to the Myth of the Lost Cause originated from Richmond Virginia but South Carolina also contributed, especially in the veneration of **Wade Hampton**, as did Georgia with contributions from **John Gordon**, who among other things organized a series of **veterans' reunions** in the late 1800s where a **common themes** were that "genius and valor went down before brute force," or that units had been ordered to surrender "not by the enemy but by their officers."

Typically these **reunions featured racist oratory** such as encouraging future generations "to cling to the traditions of your race." Or that "... we laid down our arms, but we did not lay down our principles, the fight for civilization must go on. ...Whites alone, must rule America."

Looking Closely at the sub-elements and the myths.

1. From post-war writings by Stephens and Davis: The South's cause became a noble one in defense of an idea rather than a mean one in defense of materialistic interests.

This element is central to the Myth but is mostly, if not entirely, fictional.

After the war **Stephens, Davis** and others began to argue that the states seceded for a variety of reasons, states' rights, tariff, restoration of the Declaration of Independence and/or Constitution, preservation of the Southern way of life, and especially that slavery was not the reason for seceding. The argument for constitutional states' rights had been fiercely fought and largely lost during the Constitutional Convention of 1783.

The problem was that **these justifications had been contradicted by a plethora of statements and actions made by themselves and other fire eaters prior to the war.** It's easy to Google sources for the many pre-secession statements by Southerners, especially the fire eaters, who made clear that the purpose of secession was to protect and preserve their peculiar institution.

Lincoln's election caused a big shift politically. For the first time in its history the United States has a president of a party that declared: "... the normal condition of all territory of the United States is that of freedom." Although Lincoln's position was limited to excluding slavery from the territories, Southerners saw this as a threat to slavery everywhere, and indeed more radical members of the President's party wanted to abolish slavery altogether.

Of the 50 delegates who met in Montgomery to form the CSA, 49 were slave owners, with 21 being full-scale planters, defined as those with 20 or more slaves.

During the secessionist winter of 1860-61 the secessionists demanded **three things of the North** to preserve the Union:

- a. To accept and respect all parts of the 1850 compromise package, especially the new Fugitive Slave law;
- b. To abandon all attempts to outlaw slavery in Washington DC and the Federal territories; and
- c. To be prepared to admit additional slave states into the Union.

A couple compromises were drafted in the Congress in attempts to avoid the breakup of the Union. Each of these so-called compromises included provisions that protected the status of slavery in existing states as well as in the territories **in effect nullifying the 1860 election.**

Often overlooked that many Northerners entered the fight to preserve democracy, in other words the results of the 1860 election.

CSA constitution was similar to USA constitution except for provisions that "No law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves" could ever be enacted by the CSA government. Another provision required that all new states shall be slave states. One irony of the CSA government is that it often and consistently ignored or overran states' right on several wartime measures.

2. The inevitability of Union victory due to its material and manpower superiority. The futility of Southern military efforts only intensified the tragedy and honor of these sacrifices.

This is partly true and partly fiction. We never had a chance but boy didn't we wage a gallant, brave fight. It ignores the pre-war assumption that the Confederacy would easily win a quick battle.

Lee's perfection as a general became central to the Myth of the Lost Cause. Not only was Lee a great general but he possessed the rare **combination of Christian virtues and the bravery of old Roman manhood**. Obviously Lee was good material as a Lost Cause centerpiece but the writers elevated him to great, nearly perfect. Lee was portrayed as a man of action, intelligence, and vigor who in the end was beaten by an inferior general, **Sam Grant**, who took advantage of overwhelming numbers that he did not hesitate to sacrifice in needless battles. The Lost Cause writers can talk about Lee and his relationship with Stonewall Jackson without having to talk about slavery.

Even before returning from Canada Early had begun to write his version of the Civil War. Initially Early crossed swords with **Phil Sheridan** about the respective strengths of the armies in the Shenandoah Valley. Later while still in Canada Early intended to protect Lee's status as the greatest general of the war while defending his own maligned reputation that had suffered as a result of his disastrous Shenandoah campaign. Eventually Early's main target became **James ("Old Pete") Longstreet**, the Confederates' former 1st Corps commander. Longstreet's organizational skills and tactical skill made him one of Lee's best corps commanders. Lee once referred to him as "my old war horse."

As long as Lee was alive, no one dared to criticize him or his record. But **Gettysburg would be the fly in the ointment** unless there was some way to relieve Lee from any responsibility for that defeat; in other words the Myth needed a scapegoat to explain why Lee did not succeed at that all important battle. Otherwise Lee's defeat at Gettysburg threatened the entire rationale of the Lost Cause argument. The many Lost Cause writings about Gettysburg, and its place as the Confederates' High Tide, helped to tout the importance of Gettysburg as the Turning Point of the Civil War.

After Lee's death in 1870, an article appeared that Lee and Longstreet had agreed they would force the Union to attack once they met. It was not clear whether Longstreet was the source for that contention but he never denied it. Later Longstreet wrote that Lee erred at Gettysburg by not following Longstreet's proposal to go around the Union left to get between Meade's army and Washington DC. Old Pete compounded his difficulties by maintaining a cordial relationship with Grant, becoming a Republican, accepting well paid Federal positions, and urging fellow Southerners to reconcile with the North. He even became a Catholic!

In a January 1872 speech **Early charged that Longstreet had been slow to act** on July 2 (the day of Sickles' salient and the repulse at Little Round Top). Early claimed Lee expected Longstreet to attack the Yankee line at daybreak. Instead Longstreet did not begin his attack until 4:00 pm, resulting in a critical attack that day, which Early claimed was the turning point of the war. **Although Early's contention was historically false** it resonated with Southerners because it was exactly what they wanted to hear and became the accepted explanation for Lee's defeat in Pennsylvania.

Longstreet could have allowed others to come to his defense but instead he responded himself in a clumsy, inaccurate, and ineffectual manner, adding fuel to the flames. Old Pete was no match for Old Jube, former attorney for Virginia.

Longstreet was the perfect villain for the Lost Cause. Not only was he not from Virginia, with its emphasis upon breeding, cultural refinement, and proper ancestry in many of the writings, both fiction and non-fiction, he was a blunt soldier of backwoods origin and Dutch ancestors making him a poor candidate for veneration.

It was also important to the Myth to explain why Lee had to surrender to a supposedly an inferior general. Lee and Grant met face-to-face in battle only over the eleven month period after Grant was brought east and ending with **Lee's surrender at Appomattox**. In his farewell to his troops Lee complained that his army had been defeated only by the enemy's "overwhelming numbers."

Grant's Overland Campaign – including the major battles of The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna River, and Cold Harbor –had been a bloody affair with both sides taking unprecedented numbers of casualties, **55,000 or 37 percent of those engaged for the Union versus 32,000 or 32 percent for the Confederates**. Even Northern newspapers complained about Grant's hammering tactics in 1864. Generally speaking the Federals were able to replace their casualties while the Confederates had difficulty finding replacements.

At the very end the Confederates were further weakened by droves of desertions over the winter of 1864-65. They lost approximately 20% of their numbers first by the ill-fated attack upon Fort Stedman, another 20% at Five Forks, and most devastatingly at Sailors' Creek during the retreat. Thus it was no surprise when Lee's army was surrounded by vastly superior numbers at Appomattox. The disparity in those numbers always tended to obscure any credit that should have been given to Grant, especially by Lee's partisans.

Grant's reputation was also going to suffer in comparison to Lee who prior to the war was generally credited with being the best available soldier. If there had been a Hollywood Lee would have come out of central casting, and for that matter no actor has come close to equaling his demeanor and bearing as a commanding officer.

On the other hand Grant's pre-war reputation suffered from reports of his drinking and his inability as a civilian to find the means to support himself and his family. His less than stellar performance as President gave his critics more ammunition to attack his reputation.

His Southern critics argued that Grant's success in the West was against inferior generals; however these same critics also overlooked that much of Lee's success in the East was also against the likes of **McClellan, Pope, Burnside, and Hooker**. Grant's critics also overlooked Grant's ability to maneuver large numbers

of troops as well as his tenacious nature. According to Lost Cause mythology Grant was also rated below Stonewall Jackson as a commander.

But as much as anything else Grant's own words tended to fuel the fires against him. At least twice in 1864 he reported he was prepared to win the campaign by attrition if necessary. He also boasted that he did not intend to maneuver. The irony was that while at Old Cold Harbor Grant cleverly disguised his intentions when he sent a corps accompanied by a cavalry division toward Richmond while at the same time maneuvering another corps around the end of the Peninsula **to land at Bermuda Hundred on the James River.**

After Lee – who could ill afford to allow Federal access to Richmond -- fell for Grant's feint, the rest of the Union army, including three infantry corps and the army's baggage trains, carefully withdrew from its Cold Harbor trenches to begin a 55 mile march to Charles City C.H. near the James. During the night of June 14-15 they started traversing a 2,100 foot bridge laid across 110 pontoons. Thus by clever maneuvering Grant was able to begin **the siege of Richmond and Petersburg** that eventually ended up in Lee's defeat, something for which Grant has never been given enough credit, even by most historians.

After the war Grant really irked Lee's many partisans, as well as most objective historians, when Grant made the absurd assertion that Lee ranked below **Joe Johnston** as the Confederates' best commander.

But his words also cost him some loyalty among the Federals. He and **Buell** became hostile after Shiloh, in part because Grant was irritated when Buell tried to take credit for "saving" Grant after the first day of that battle. He and **Rosecrans** got sideways with each other after Iuka when Grant suspected Rosecrans was responsible for newspaper reports that Grant was drinking prior to that battle. And Grant was always critical of **George Thomas** (whom Sherman ranked ahead of Grant) and of the rest of the Army of the Cumberland. As a result various officers who had been with the Army of the Cumberland wrote articles critical of Grant's performance as a commander. And a historian for the 2nd Corps wrote a history of that corps that was critical of Grant's generalship, alleging that Grant had needlessly sacrificed the lives of the soldiers in that formerly elite corps during the Overland campaign.

3. The Confederacy was the one true Christian society. **Lost Cause religion sought to maintain the concept of a distinct, and superior, white Southern culture against perceived attacks.**

A religious myth does not necessarily imply a falsehood. In the context of religious studies a myth is a foundational, or sacred, story, a story that explains.

To my agnostic way of thinking this element seems like a totally distorted perspective.

This element also suggests a certain ambiguity in the phrase "Lost Cause." Instead of my Clift Notes version alluding to the military defeat of the war, this variation suggests that there was a cause noble and highly principled that was misplaced but not necessarily forgotten.

In **Lincoln's second inaugural** he said both sides believed that God was on each respective side; Lincoln also conjectured that God didn't take sides but probably laid a curse upon both sides. **After the war the North took smug satisfaction that it had been vindicated and moved on to other matters.**

However the South's pre-war self-righteous confidence led it to high expectations about a quick victory over the North led by an inept, clueless president. Early success only reinforced those notions of the righteous of the cause. However the height of its expectations was to be followed by a corresponding surge of despair and disillusionment that could be masked only partially by the rhetoric of the Lost Cause.

In order to accept the defeat without regarding it as tantamount to the loss of God's grace, Southerners mentally transformed their recollections of the antebellum South becoming a superior civilization of

great purity which God, in His mysterious wisdom, had sacrificed to the materialist Yankees. **The Confederate defeat and the ongoing ordeal of reconstruction were frequently likened to Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the Roman persecution of Christians.**

Even in defeat, the Southern cause was still a holy one, and the South would keep its hopes alive until the Cause, although lost, could spring from the ashes of the self-destroyed Union. A conviction arose that **only the Second Coming of Christ** could alleviate the conditions of Reconstruction.

Even after the war the South exhibited **two distinguishing characteristics**: 1) God is still in control, able to punish powerful countries that abuse their might. 2) While acknowledging that a revolution has taken place there is also a belief that it is a false one and can be reversed to earlier, purer principles. There was still hope that it was still not too late to abandon an immoral historical course and backtrack to the point in the past where the wrong direction had been taken.

The faith in the late Confederacy created an image of the beloved South as a sacred land. In *The Legacy of the Civil War* Random House (1961) **Robert Penn Warren** would write "... that **only at the moment when Lee handed Grant his sword was the Confederacy born**; or to state it in another way, in the moment of defeat the Confederacy entered upon its immortality." In the mid-1880s Southerners were elevating the Lost Cause above the realm of common, patriotic impulse, making it perform a clearly religious faith based upon Dixie's wartime experience. It was a mix of Protestant evangelicalism and Southern romanticism.

Lee, Stonewall, and White Confederate women were paragons of virtue and selflessness. In particular **Lee was elevated to a Christ**

figure, **"the Priest of the people."** Lee became the incarceration of the Lost Cause, viewed by some religious leaders as belonging on the same heights as **Moses, David, and George Washington.** Eventually **Jeb Stuart** and **Wade Hampton** were also accorded deity status. If these were the deity of the Lost Cause religion then Longstreet, the scalawag, became identified as a **Judas** like figure. By the end of the century several organizations enshrined the Lost Cause as a kind of public religion.

Periodicals filled their magazines with stories, anecdotes and poems praising the pious Stonewall Jackson until his character seemed too good for this world. **Wartime death was explicitly equated with Christian martyrdom,** while suffering under Reconstruction was perceived as a test of individual spiritual righteousness and fortitude.

The stark, even grim photographs taken of the destruction of Southern cities such as Richmond and Petersburg were seen by Northerners as documentation of retribution for secession; in the Southern view these photographs provided reminders of indignities and fueled pride in the Lost Cause.

Symbols were, and probably still are, a major means of expressing any cultural religion, including the Myth of the Lost Cause. Three major sacred mementoes, deserving of "perpetual commemorations" by one speaker, Methodist minister and onetime commander of the United Confederate Veterans, **were the song "Dixie," the Confederate battle flag, and the gray uniform of the South.**

Monuments, and their dedications, are also important. One inscription on a monument in Augusta reads, "No nation rose so white and fair: None fell so pure of crime."

4. **Antebellum slavery was essentially benevolent** -- a sincere effort to uplift an inferior race. The old south was remembered for its "moonlight and magnolias." **The prewar South was characterized as a time of near perfection, a utopia for white people and a blessing for slaves.** Pictured slaveholders as unfailingly generous and gentle toward their property and presented slaves as loyal and obedient."

This is classic partly truth but mostly fiction

For a variety of reasons it's important to recognize that the South and the Confederacy were not always the same. There were pockets of disagreement in the South, usually in the foothills or up-country. Virginia lost 35 of its counties when western Virginia split off. There's an upcoming movie titled *The State of Jones* based upon a nonfiction book by the same name; it's about a county in Mississippi that was in revolt against the Confederacy.

Unlike most Whites the planters enjoyed an opulent lifestyle with huge, eloquent homes. These planters entertained with hunting, boating regattas and horse races, lavish dinner parties and balls.

1/4 of Whites owned slaves; averaged 4-6 slaves per master. Planters were defined as those who owned 20 or more slaves. 1/8 of masters were planters for a total of 46,000 planters.

The planters controlled the state legislatures as well as all three branches of the Federal government.

Except the two **Adamses** all previous 15 presidents had been to some extent politically beholden to the Southern slave states.

During the first 72 years from 1789 to 1861, slaveholders had been president for 49 of those years.

The only reelected presidents were slaveholders. Both Adamses reasonably believed they would have been reelected had it not been for the three-fifths clause awarded to slave states.

Two-thirds of the House speakers, chairmen of the House Ways and Means Committees, and presidents pro tem of the Senate were Southerners. At all times before 1861, Southerners were a majority of the Supreme Court justices.

When Lincoln was elected all 12 of the Committee Chairmen in the Senate were Southerners.

Slaves provided several vital kinds of labor: Boatsmen, mechanics & artisans & tradesmen. About 3/4 of the slaves worked the land & fields but in addition to the fields slaves worked in factories & commercial establishments & homes.

The four million slaves were worth \$3 billion, exceeding the value of all farmland in the South and three times the construction costs of all railroads in the land. Slaves produced half the South's tobacco, almost all sugar, rice and hemp. 9/10 of cotton, accounting for 1/2 all U.S. exports.

One SC political leader freely conceded that without slavery the plantation system would collapse, reducing the Southern elite to "utter poverty & misery" while spreading "dissolution throughout the land.

Until the invention of the cotton gin slavery was considered to be a necessary evil. Eventually **John C. Calhoun** started arguing that slavery was **"a good, a positive good."** Calhoun's argument became a principal cause of civilizations since all social systems required a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life.

According to the Myth Africans were a degraded race, an inferior race, too stupid, primitive and childish to take care of themselves. Slaves were grateful the Whites supervised their lives. If shackles of slaves were removed the slaves' primitiveness would reassert itself in pillage, rape and murder.

Many slave owners believed slaves worked so hard because they found pleasure in their work. But slaves encountered "**negative incentives**" -- whips that left stripes. Overseers were not bashful about demonstrating "slave management" to Northern visitors.

Slave health depended upon two opposing impulses: Keeping the slaves minimally fit while reducing the costs of keeping them alive. Slave babies had a one chance in three of surviving to their first birthday, half the rate for white babies. On some rice plantations more than one half of slave infants died at birth.

Slave owners claimed they used their power to improve the lives of slaves. Of course it was illegal to teach slaves to read or write. Moreover owners **broke up slave families all the time.** Upon the death of an owner his heirs divided families simply as they saw fit based upon their rationalization that Black parents did not have strong paternal feelings for their offspring.

Although masters denied taking **sexual advantage** of female slaves there simply was too much visual evidence to the contrary. Furthermore some masters did not hesitate to sell off their own offspring.

But the proof of slaves' overall attitude was that almost immediately upon Lincoln's election some slaves began to emancipate themselves. The Federal policy evolved from that of returning slaves to their masters at the beginning of the war to the enactment of the 13th Amendment. Again there were variations among

slaves with the rule of thumb being that slaves in the northern tier tended to be more loyal to their masters than in the Deep South, where conditions were more brutal. Some slaves remained loyal to their masters or to their masters' families while the master was off to war but by the end of the war there were 200,000 Blacks in the Union army, the overwhelming majority being former slaves.

Many non-slave owners looked with envy and admiration upon masters who understood they needed political support of the yeomen. Masters rented or lent slaves to yeomen, lent them money, ginned their cotton, transported their harvested crops to market. By 1860 almost all southern Whites regarded Blacks as inherently inferior, degraded and dangerous, and could not conceive of living amongst Blacks.

Many upcountry Whites were anxious to climb up the social ladder by buying slaves, **Gov. Joseph Brown** being an example who argued that slavery kept Blacks out of their hills where they would plunder and steal, rape and kill.

Why did non-slave owners fight? Important to remember that the cause for a war is not the same as the reasons why men fight. Several reasons that varied from region to region. They were against Black equality; they identified slavery with Southern way of life; they were opposed to Northern invasion; they were fearful that Lincoln would make them slaves; they were opposed to the mixing of the races. Regardless of reasons for joining the fight most soldiers on either side came to realize the war would not be won or lost until the slave issue was settled.

How has the Myth been Perpetrated?

By the 1880s a **reconciliation between the North and the South** began that lasted through WW I. This reconciliation was fueled by the

South's desire to attract industry, by the Northern investors' desire to make money, and by a desire by Northerners to push aside the "Negro question." Also this reconciliation helped to better facilitate the sentimental reunions of Civil War veterans.

By the end of the century several organizations, such as the **United Confederate Veterans**, the **United Daughters of the Confederacy**, and the **Southern Historical Society**, with Jubal Early being one of its more prolific contributors, articulated their beliefs in rituals such as the dedication of monuments, the publications of books and articles, and the folk memory of the war. Ultimately **the Society published 52 volumes**, many which became standard reference sources. Other ways that the Myth was perpetrated was by the memoirs of the participants, speeches at reunions, and artwork.

Also by late into the 1800s some **proponents of a New South** used an idolized version of Confederate generals to push for economic advances. For instance Confederate generals such as Lee were portrayed as men of action, drive, and innovation who broke with aristocratic traditions without sacrificing their faith. Lee was praised for his abilities as an administrator where he revealed "energy, forecast, and watchfulness" as he provided for the means of subsistence of his army. These were the model for Southerners to thrive in the emerging world of industrial capitalism.

Into the 19th Century other writers helped to perpetuate the Myth, especially as it related to Longstreet's attack on Day Two. Although Jubal Early advocated several other facets of the mythology these other arguments gained little traction. However his assertions against Longstreet were seconded by other military writers and have endured almost to the present. One of the most prominent was **Douglas Southall Freeman** who was born May 16, 1886, the son of a Confederate officer, in

Lynchburg, Virginia. He graduated from Richmond College in 1904 before earning a Ph.D. in history from Johns Hopkins in 1908. In 1911 he obtained a cache of long-lost wartime correspondence between Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. In 1915 he became the editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, a position he held for 34 years.

Freeman's two most important Civil War publications:

- *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, 4 Volumes published between 1934 and 1936 that were winners of the *Pulitzer Prize*; and
- *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, 3 Volumes published between 1942 and 1944.

Thomas Buell has said of Freeman's writings: "His writings popularized Lee more than anything else ever written. ... [H]research was often exacting and discriminating, although in some instances his citations are so nebulous that they provide shaky foundations for some of his more earnest assertions."

James M. McPherson has noted that that: "Freeman portrayed a Lee almost without blemishes or warts."

In his first publications Freeman accused Longstreet of slowness, sulkiness and even "insubordination." In his subsequent publications of a decade later Freeman offered a fairer, more historically accurate assessment of Longstreet's performance, saying that Longstreet's performance "does not warrant the traditional accusation that he was the villain of the piece," and that his "instinct was correct" in opposing the July 2 assault. Nevertheless Freeman concluded that the price of the victory at Chancellorsville was defeat at Gettysburg.

The United Daughters of the Confederacy, a group of approximately 20,000 respectable White women, has been most ardent in trying to rewrite history. **The UDC's most important and lasting contribution was an article of faith that the South had not fought to preserve slavery, this being a false accusation in an attempt to smear the reputation of the South's gallant leaders.** The organization was led by Mildred ("Miss Milly") Lewis Rutherford who traveled widely to assure that Southern youngsters learned the "correct" truth about the war and why it happened.

In 1920 Miss Milly wrote a book *The Truths of History* asserting that Lincoln was a mediocre intellect, the South's had wanted to expand slave territory to provide space so that slaves could be set free, and the Ku Klux Klan was a peaceful organization whose only purpose was to maintain public order. She also had the idea for an annual **Confederate Memorial Day**, June 3, Jeff Davis's birthday.

The UDC's other function was to prevent the intrusion of the "incorrect" version of the war from Southern schools. The organization lobbied several Southern legislatures to ban textbooks that might portray Confederates from being anything less than noble. Additionally the organization was able to force the resignation of professors who had dared to deviate from the UDC's agenda.

Current Influences -- (Suggestions for roundtable to discuss)

- In 2010 Texas school officials insisted that Jefferson Davis' inaugural address be given equal treatment to Lincoln's.
- The next year textbooks for fourth graders in Virginia taught that thousands of slaves took up arms for the Confederacy.
- Recent geometry textbook for secondary students that Africans came to America seeking work.
- Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg KY
- Advertisements in Civil War magazines
- British authors with J.F.C. Fuller being an exception
- Fiction, especially *Killer Angels*
- Movies: *Gone With the Wind*
- Prints
- Gettysburg

Primary Source: Various Essays by Alan T. Nolan, Gary W. Gallagher, Jeffrey Wert, Brooks D. Simpson & Lesley J. Gordon in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, Gallagher & Nolan, Editors Bloomington: Indiana University Press (2000)

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